

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action that was mailed on September 25, 2003. The recitation of claim 3 is incorporated into claim 1. In addition, claims 1 and 4 are amended to specify that the protective metal partition is composed of heat-resistant steel and that the furnace inner wall is ceramic, in accordance with the disclosure in the specification, for instance in the second full paragraph on page 8, in the first full paragraph on page 10, and in the first full paragraph on page 12. No new matter is introduced by this Amendment. Entry of this Amendment, in order to place the application into condition for allowance, or into better condition for appeal, is respectfully solicited. With this Amendment, claims 1, 2, and 4, as amended, are in the application.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by US 5,294,244 (Allerton). Inasmuch as these claims now include the feature of former claim 3, which was not rejected as being anticipated by Allerton, this ground of rejection does not apply.

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0 677 336 (Nakasato) in view of Allerton. The Examiner argues that the Nakasato apparatus "is inherently capable [of] judging the timing of charge of the inflators". Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to document this assertion. Also, claims 1 and 2 also require that a metal partition wall composed of heat-resistant steel be provided between an inflator and an inner surface of a ceramic wall of the furnace.

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakasato in view of US 3,793,101 (Mullarkey). The Examiner argues that "it

would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the step of judging in the method of Nakasato et al., since the step is inherent to the method of Nakasato". Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to document this assertion. Also, claim 4 also requires that a metal partition wall composed of heat-resistant steel be provided between an inflator and an inner surface of a ceramic wall of the furnace.

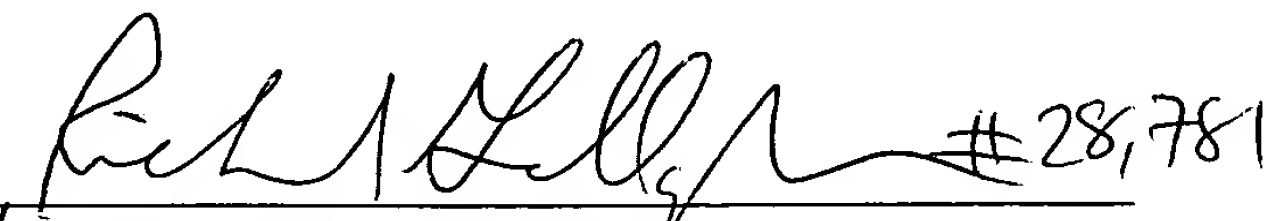
Conclusion

If the Examiner has any questions concerning this application, she is requested to contact Richard Gallagher, Reg. No. 28,781, at (703) 205-8008.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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